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RURAL SOCIOLOGY: STANDARDIZATION OF RESEARCH¹

CO-OPERATIVE PLAN OF NATIONAL RURAL RESEARCH

I. DEFINITIONS

1. *Rural sociology*.—It is recommended that the co-operative research in rural sociology be directed primarily to the social problems of farm populations. This limitation, however, is not to be construed as shutting out treatment of the relations of farm populations either to village populations or to city populations.

2. *Rural*.—Usage has established many meanings in connection with the term rural—often vague, sometimes contradictory. It is recommended, therefore, that the term rural be discontinued in statistical calculations and that there be substituted the more specific terms country, farm, village, small city—as the case may be. The term rural should be reserved for very general reference to country and village conditions and relations, or used in the sense defined by the United States Census,² or else should be carefully defined.

3. *Country*.—It is recommended that the term country, when used in a rural sense, apply to the areas outside the limits of villages and cities incorporated or unincorporated.

4. *Farm*.—It is recommended that the term farm be used according to the definition of the United States Census.³

¹ At the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society in Philadelphia in 1917 a few persons interested in rural sociology held an informal conference and appointed the Committee on Standardization which has prepared this report.

² "The Census Bureau, for purposes of discussion, has defined urban population as that residing in cities and other incorporated places of 2,500 inhabitants or more, and rural population as that residing outside such incorporated places."—Thirteenth Census, 1910, Bulletin.

³ "A farm, for census purposes, is all the land which is directly farmed by one person managing and conducting agricultural operations, either by his own labor alone, or with the assistance of members of his household, or hired employees. . . . Any tract of 3 or more acres used for agricultural operations and all tracts containing less than 3 acres which either produced at least \$250 worth of farm products in 1900 or required for their agricultural operations the continuous services of at least one person" are designated as farms.—Thirteenth Census, 1910.

5. *Village*.—It is recommended that the term village be used to designate the small type of commercial and residential cluster, whether it be incorporated as a "village" or unincorporated. It seems premature to set a numerical population standard, however, for the village.

6. *Small city*.—It is recommended that the term small city be used to apply to commercial clusters larger than the village, but still small enough to have decided immediate relations to farm populations.

7. *Country neighborhood*.—It is recommended that the term neighborhood be employed to refer to a geographical group of farm families having some distinct local social cohesion.

8. *Community*.—It is recommended that the term community, when construed in a technical sense with reference to farm populations, be employed to designate the population group which is formed by a village or small city, together with all the farm families making this village or city their regular business center.

9. *Urban*.—It is recommended that the term urban be discontinued in statistical calculations, and that the more specific term city or village be employed. The term urban should be reserved for very general reference to the relations of life in the clustered type of residence, or used in the sense defined by the United States Census, or else should be carefully defined.

10. *Farm population*.—It is recommended that the term farm population be construed as relating to population living on farms. It is evident, therefore, that farm population will be found in the country, in unincorporated villages, in incorporated villages, and also in cities; that is, wherever there are farms as defined by the United States Census. Owners of farms will not constitute a part of farm population unless residing on a farm.

11. *Country population*.—It is evident that besides farm population living in the country there is also a certain amount of suburban non-farm population.

12. *Rural or agricultural economics and rural sociology*.—In order to relate rural sociology as closely as possible to rural or agricultural economics, especially on the statistical side, it has been deemed wise, in defining rural sociology, to make its general field coincide with that of rural or agricultural economics.

13. *Rural education and rural sociology*.—It is recommended that the field of rural sociology, as discriminated from the field of rural education, include the specifically social aspects of educational agencies relating to

farm populations, but not the technique of educational agencies, problems, or administration.

II. A NATIONAL PROGRAM OF RURAL RESEARCH

1. *War conditions*.—In view of war conditions it is recommended that for the ensuing year a moderate program of co-operative research be planned—the attempt being made to get a start in the scientific investigation of some few problems.

2. *Budgets for research*.—It is earnestly recommended that colleges, universities, theological seminaries, and philanthropic foundations appropriate annually a definite fund for specified rural research projects. Graduate students and selected undergraduates can help instructors in rural sociology to carry out a program of valuable research if given an allowance for expense accounts.

3. *Research assistants*.—Scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships in rural sociology are urgently recommended in connection with educational institutions. Rural-life departments of church agencies may well consider the feasibility of establishing traveling scholarships, fellowships, and research assistantships for the study of church problems by young men and women in connection with university research departments.

4. *A correspondence inquiry*.—The committee has made an extended inquiry among the leaders of rural thought with a view to arriving at a consensus of opinion as to the significant general and special rural social problems, and also to obtain suggestions upon methods of research and methods of co-operation in a nation-wide program of research. As a result of this correspondence some fifty problems were proposed and a dozen points established with regard to methods. After carefully weighing these suggestions, the committee has decided to present for co-operative research during the coming year two general problems, one of which has theoretical value in determining some of the elements of rural society, the other of which, by general consent, is deemed one of the most general significant practical problems facing America.

The committee presents also three varied special problems having a highly practical bearing on further research. It is recommended that for the ensuing year institutions and persons doing research work in rural sociology include in their research program one or more of the following problems:

A. GENERAL PROBLEMS

1. Determining and analyzing the population group which approximates the community in agricultural sections.

2. An investigation of the social aspects of tenancy, with special reference to advantageous and detrimental conditions growing out of this form of landholding rather than out of farm life in general.

B. SPECIAL PROBLEMS

1. Making a state-wide directory of rural organizations.
2. Making a state map of all high-school districts in the state.
3. Codifying state laws relating to the social welfare of farm population and village population.

Co-operative research plan.—It is recommended that the Committee on Standardization become a clearing house for national rural research plans and results, making each year an announcement of research objects which will be undertaken and a summary of results already obtained.

C. STANDARDIZATION OF PROBLEMS AS PROPOSED

I. GENERAL PROBLEMS

1. *Determination and analysis of the community in agricultural sections.*—The purpose of this study is to make a nation-wide investigation of the population group which seems to incorporate farm populations into comprehensive local communities.

It is recommended, therefore, that in each state at least one comprehensive trading-center (of about 2,500 inhabitants) and its surrounding farm population be studied, analyzed, and mapped. The method recommended is that used and described in *Research Bulletin No. 34* of the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Wisconsin (copies of this bulletin may be obtained free on request).

2. *Social aspects of farm tenancy.*—Public opinion selects this problem as the most serious general problem of a practical nature confronting rural life in America at the present time.

Scope of study.—The following recommendations are made—

- a) In each state sections (communities as heretofore defined) should be selected for study which have the highest increasing percentage of tenancy.
- b) Sections characterized by large holdings or estates should be studied and compared with sections characterized by small holdings or farms.
- c) Sections characterized by a low percentage of tenancy should be studied for comparative purposes.
- d) Purely racial determinants should be guarded against. American-born communities should be chosen where possible.

Co-operating agencies.—

- a) Residents of states where tenancy is high and the tenant problems acute, who may be graduate students in another state, can be utilized to do research work in their own states.
- b) Graduate students of colleges and universities.
- c) Selected undergraduate students.
- d) Rural ministers registering with some accredited institution may enter the co-operative plan of research.
- e) County Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. secretaries.
- f) Representatives of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Method of study.—It is recommended that the statistical part of the study of tenancy be confined during the coming year to an exhaustive enumeration of tenants and owners, community by community, covering a ten-year period, from 1918 back to 1908. The center of interest will be the *shifting of tenants*. The study will show the occupancy of every farm during each year of the ten-year period with respect to the following facts: name of occupant, whether tenant or owner, whether coming to this farm from outside the community or from within the community, whether the tenant is or is not related to the owner, whether tenant becomes owner, and whether owner becomes tenant. The outcome of the study in any one community will be the tenant history of every farm in the ten-year period, the average length of stay of tenants on the same farm, the average length of stay of tenants in the same community, the difference, if any, in the foregoing respects between tenants related to owner and tenants unrelated to owner, and the average length of stay of owners on the same farm and in the same community. Every actual shift of a tenant would be counted as intracommunity or intercommunity ("actual shift" being from tenant to tenant, owner to tenant, or tenant to owner). The total number of tenant shifts per year in the community would be known, both from farm to farm in the same community and from community to community. The ratio consisting of the number of actual shifts of tenants divided by the number of possible tenant shifts (assuming as "possible" one tenant shift per year per farm) would be a measure of shifting tenancy by which communities could be compared. The ratio 1 would be the maximum (a tenant shift on every farm every year) and would indicate a decided pathology in respect to the stability of farm populations.

It is recommended that the accompanying schedule be used in the field work of the tenancy survey.

Summary of schedules.—It cannot be too earnestly urged that the study of a shifting tenancy should be by communities, as heretofore

a relative normality of condition. A static, immobile condition of tenancy, feared for its stagnating characteristics, is so far from the case in America that it may probably be considered negligible in this study.

It is evident that there may be obtained an index figure of intercommunity tenant shifting and also one of intracommunity tenant shifting, assuming in the one case as "possible" an intercommunity tenant shift each year on each farm, in the other case an intracommunity tenant shift each year on each farm. It is recommended that in each community studied the index of intercommunity tenant shifting be ascertained for comparison with the index of general tenant shifting.

Supplementary information.—All the supplementary information possible should be accumulated during this statistical study of the stability of tenant families in a community, such as causes of shifting, social results of shifting, evident character of community institutions, and standards of living. These questions, however, should be considered supplementary to the co-operative research study. A statistical study in every state, reduced to a ratio of tenancy, will go far toward furnishing a clue toward determining conditions of social health or disease in the tenant situation. This study is made as simple as possible in order to enable the committee to develop a technique of co-operative research. The facts of shift will be made the basis for a comprehensive study of the significance of shift at a later period.

2. SPECIAL PROBLEMS

1. *Making a state-wide directory of rural organizations.*—A valuable and very suggestive social instrument is the rural directory. It can be made comprehensive and by annual revision become a document of general value. Every agricultural college should have such a directory. Correspondence and library work furnish the data.

It is recommended that a directory be compiled in every state which shall include every farmers' club, rural neighborhood club, or social center, co-operative associations, chapters of national rural organizations, farm bureaus, and the like. Churches, schools, and fraternal orders need not be included. The value of a directory will depend upon its accuracy and its exhaustive character.

2. *Making a state map locating exactly all high-school districts.*—The legal description of every high-school district is on record in some office. It is a relatively simple matter to obtain by correspondence a transcript of this description and then to plat the district on a state map to scale. The high-school situation with respect to our farm population will be highly illuminated by a set of state maps for nation-wide comparison.

3. *Codifying the state laws relating to the social welfare of farm population.*—This study does not require field work but may be done in the law library. A pamphlet, carefully edited, containing a digest of such laws in any state would provide the beginnings for other practical studies. This study of rural social law must come very soon if an advance is to be made in rural welfare.

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NOTE.—Correspondence on standardization of rural problems or on co-operative rural research may be addressed to the chairman of the committee, who will reply promptly. Persons or institutions planning to undertake the co-operative research work this year should send in the preliminary facts—problem selected, area to be studied, names of those making studies, probable date of completion. It is urged that the method outlined be followed exactly for sake of uniformity. An announcement of the selection of rural research problems, state by state, will be made by the committee in January, 1919.